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## Lebanon

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# Israel backs Iran's Hezbollah terrorists

by Thierry Lalevée

The Israeli government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, while vociferously defending its secret arms sales, on behalf of the U.S. National Security Council, to Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, is now shifting its support in Lebanon from the Amal militia to the Iranian-backed Hezbollah terrorists. It is the Amal Shi'ite group that laid siege to Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut and Rashidiyyah starting last November, refusing to allow food to be brought into the camps, slowly starving up to 40,000 people. Israel's tactical shift in alliance from the Lebanese Shi'ites to the Iranian Shi'ites, means that the Hezbollah will now be given the greater role in smashing the Palestinians.

It is not only the Israelis who are squeezing out the Amal; the Soviet Union and Syria too are shifting alliances, whose only outcome will be the continuing descent of Lebanon into barbarism.

When on Feb. 5, Palestinians besieged in the Beirut refugee camp of Burj al Barajneh asked for a waiver of the religious prohibition against eating human flesh, the world reacted in shock to learn of the hideous effects of the blockade. On Feb. 8, Sheikh Fadlallah, the spiritual leader of the Hezbollah in Lebanon, did issue a religious authorization to practice cannibalism. But in fact, as bad as the situation was in the camps, no one ever thought of carrying out such practices; the public demand by the Palestinians was a desperate ploy to draw attention to their plight, and it worked.

By Feb. 14, the Amal militias were forced to allow food supplies to reach the camps. By Feb. 18, the Amal announced that it would lift its siege, as "we cannot consider entering the camps. It would provoke a massacre against women and children, such as no militia can afford."

The battle of the camps, as it has been called, heralded a rapid change of alliances, along the following lines:

- Israel intervened into the conflict as much as it could against the Palestinians. At the high point of the battle of the camps, on Feb. 12-13, Israeli jet fighters twice attacked Palestinian positions in Sidon. "Miraculously," none of these raids hit the Hezbollah positions in Sidon, although these were only meters away from the Palestinians. In fact, the Israelis were providing air cover to the Hezbollah against

the Palestinians.

A few days earlier, one of the Amal's Politburo members, Daoud Daoud, who is responsible for southern Lebanon, had broken with the Amal and joined the Hezbollah. Last November, Daoud Daoud had negotiated increased Israeli arms shipments to Amal. An alliance with the Hezbollah will not trouble anyone among the Ariel Sharon grouping in Israel, represented in Lebanon by Uri Lubrani; this is precisely the Israeli faction that has been selling arms to Iran all along.

- Syria has been using Nabih Berri's Amal in direct clashes with both the Palestinians and the Christians, and trying to use it to contain the growing influence of the Hezbollah. It is no coincidence that as the battle of the camps started, Berri went to Damascus and stayed there, fearing assassination. Yet Syria's support for Amal, too, is flagging, as we shall see.

- The Christian forces began to use the Palestinians against the Amal and Syria, from purely pragmatic motives: Christian vessels carried Palestinian units from Cyprus to the Lebanese port of Junieh at a high price.

### Moscow's growing role

Behind these shifting chess pieces is a bigger game. Israel's Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, with the full support of Prime Minister Shamir, has been in intense negotiations with Syria over recent months. But while Syria and Israel may have a regional say in the matter of Lebanon's future, increasingly the main power has become the Soviet Union. Indeed, through the incessant taking of Western hostages, the presence of French, British, and American residents is now close to nil, while Moscow has strengthened its role.

Since last November, Soviet Ambassador Valery Kolutcha has been entrusted by the Lebanese government to act as a mediator among the warring factions. On Feb. 12, First Secretary Yuri Suslikhov underlined once again that "the Soviet Union will not leave Lebanon." It also has a concrete military interest. In late November, Soviet military advisers in disguise began building two radar monitoring stations in the Chouf mountains of Druse warlord Walid Jumblatt.

Two days before it was forced to lift the siege of the camps, the Amal militia was assaulted by the combined forces of Jumblatt's Druse and the militias of the Lebanese Communist Party of George Hawi. During Feb. 2-7, Hawi had chaired the congress of his party under the aegis of Karen Brutents of the Soviet Central Committee.

Amal's formal ally, Syria, didn't come to its aid, but instead pressured Berri to lift the siege and to sign a ceasefire with the Communists. As far as Syria and Moscow are concerned, Amal has now served its purpose and can be gotten rid of. Their main task now is to contain the influence of Iran, which made cheap propagandistic gains by denouncing the attacks against the Palestinians. Now Syria is ready to negotiate a new modus vivendi with the Palestinians—for a short time, at any rate.